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The Collector and Art Critic

Justice; they strip the woman of her drapery, thrust a mirror into her hand, and thus admonish us of Truth. The thing would be ridiculous were it not so piteous. It is piteous because it is so hopelessly alien to the vast and throbbing vitality of our actual present—it is banal plagiarism, empty and irrelevant.

In the days of the Renaissance such allegorical subjects may have had their meaning. Cultivated people were rejoicing in the study of classic literature; everyone was familiar with allegory in the dramatic representations of the day and in the frequent ceremonies and pageants of the Church and the Municipality. But today our drama, our literature, and the whole tenor of our life are based upon realities. Not that this fact prevents our being conscious of something spiritual underlying the realism, indeed, in every branch of art we are waiting for the man who can interpret the spiritual in terms of the material, and reinforce the grandeur of the material and ameliorate its brutality by suggestion of the inherent spirit. So, while we have no use whatever for empty, time-worn allegories, we do need something of symbolism in our mural painting.

And, perhaps it is the absence of this in certain paintings which undertake to represent incidents in the history of the Republic that make the latter almost as empty of real significance as the allegorical concoctions. There is in them but little, if any, more suggestion to the imagination than in the cuts in the newspaper representing, for example, the President laying a corner stone. Both the painting and the photograph make a corresponding appeal to our sense of

facts; the former, possibly, with some added interest of technical treatment, while the photograph has the advantage of being founded upon fact, instead of upon an invention of what the fact may have been.

If, then, on the other hand, the picture of bare incident, and, on the other, the barren allegory are alike deficient, in what direction shall we look for the mural painting that will arouse enthusiasm? In some union, surely, of the concrete and the abstract; in a recognition that there are facts of spirit as well as of matter, and that the material facts of our civilization are but an expression of the spirit of our people. When an artist arrives big enough in intellect and imagination to possess himself with the bigness of our material life, he will, we may be confident, rely upon the facts of our civilization, but he will throw the crude material into the alembic of his imagination and distil thence some quality of symbolism with which to sublimate the representation of the facts. This is practically what Puvis de Chavannes did amidst much discouragement in France, and his was the most significant decoration of the century.

It is, of course, not by copying the externals of Puvis' style that the great American mural painter will be known, but by having assimilated his principle. He will have realized the spirit underlying the material forces of our civilization and will have discovered for himself a fitting manner of symbolical expression.

At present, I believe, many people, painters included, confuse symbolism with allegory, but that is another story.

And the Artists, No Less Than the Novelists

The novelists, no less than other men, should strive to make most intelligible to as many of us fellow-beings as possible the fundamental truth that the universe is the common property of us all, and we should help each other to enter into our

inheritance and enjoy the fullness of it.
Stephen Phillips.

And George Moore says:

Life is an end in itself and the object of art is to help us to live.